Property Tax Assistance Program for Widows or Widowers of Veterans

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

If you are a senior citizen or disabled person and a widow or widower of a qualifying veteran, Washington has a program that may help you pay your property taxes and special assessments. Your household income, age or disability, and your spouse's veteran status at the time of his/her death determine your eligibility for this program.

The Property Tax Assistance for Widows and Widowers of Veterans is a grant program. This assistance is not a loan and does not have to be repaid to the state of Washington unless you cease to reside in your home before December 15 of the year you receive the assistance. The purpose of the program is to allow widows and widowers of qualifying veterans to remain in their homes in spite of rising property taxes. The grant will provide funds for the payment of all or a portion of the excess levies and regular property taxes due on your property.

"Excess levies" are taxes approved by voters at special or general elections. Examples of excess levies include operation and maintenance levies and school bond levies.

Regular levies are generally imposed without needing voter approval.

This program works in conjunction with the Senior Citizens/Disabled Persons Exemption Program. If your annual disposable income is less than $35,000, you should also enroll in the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Exemption program administered by your county. This will provide you the maximum amount of assistance.

This publication provides a basic description of the Property Tax Assistance Program for Widows and Widowers of Veterans. This information is current at the time of publication. Future law changes may make some of this information incorrect.

How do I apply for this program?

You must complete the Property Tax Assistance Claim Form for Widows and Widowers of Veterans (form # 63 0023) and send it with the required documentation to the Department of Revenue. The mailing address is listed on the claim form.

Where do I find a claim form or ask for help in completing the form?

This form is available from several sources.

- Download the form from our web site at http://dor.wa.gov
- Contact the Veterans' Service Center at 1-800-562-2308 *(The service center will also help you complete the form and get the required documents to establish your eligibility.)*
- Phone the Grant Administrator at (360) 570-5873
- Contact your local county assessor's office

When should I apply?

This program offers assistance beginning with the 2006 tax year. **Apply for the assistance 30 days before your taxes are due.** For example, if you want assistance for taxes due April 30, apply no later than March 31.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible you must qualify in each of four categories.

Category One:
Age or Disability

You must be at least 62 years old by December 31 of the year in which you apply.
Or
You must be disabled. A disabled person may be any age and must be disabled at the time of filing. The disability must be such that the applicant is unable to pursue substantial gainful employment and the condition must either be expected to result in death or must be expected to last for a period of at least 12 months. The disability need not be permanent. Annually, the Social Security Administration determines the amount a person may earn and still retain disabled status.

Category Two:
Status

You must not have re-married. Assistance is available to widows/ widowers of a veteran who:

- Died as a result of a service-connected disability
- Was 100 percent disabled as determined by the U.S. Veterans Administration for 10 years prior to his/her death
- Was a former prisoner of war and rated as 100 percent disabled for at least one year prior to death
- Died on active duty or in active training status

Documents verifying your status as a widow or widower and verifying your spouse's qualification for the program can be obtained from the Veterans Service Center at the Department of Veterans Affairs, 1-800-562-2308.

Category Three:
Ownership

You must own and occupy the residence for which assistance is claimed.

You are NOT eligible for the program if you have:

- Life estate
- Lease for life
- Revocable trust
- Shared ownership in a cooperative housing unit

Assistance is available for your primary residence and up to one acre of land.

You must occupy the home for at least six months each year. Your residence may qualify even if you are temporarily living in a hospital, nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home. A home owned by co-tenants may qualify. Only one of the co-tenants must meet the qualifications.

A mobile home may qualify as your residence even if you do not own the land where the mobile home is located.

Category Four:
Income

Annual combined disposable income may not exceed $40,000.

If your combined disposable income is $35,000 or less, you should also apply for the Property Tax Exemption Program for Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons.

Combined disposable income includes your disposable income and that of any co-tenants. A co-tenant is a person living in your home who also has an ownership interest in your home.

Since applications are filed in the year the taxes are due, income from the preceding year is used to determine your eligibility.

Example: If you apply for assistance in paying 2006 taxes, you must use your 2005 income to determine eligibility for the program.

How is disposable income calculated?

Disposable income includes all sources, whether or not the income is taxable for federal tax purposes. Some common sources of income include:

- Wages, salaries and tips
- Social Security benefits
- Railroad retirement benefits
- Pension and annuity receipts including retirement bonds, Individual Retirement Accounts, and distributions from keogh plans. An annuity is a payment of a fixed sum of money received at regular intervals. Some examples of annuity payments are unemployment compensation, disability payments, and welfare receipts (excluding amounts received for the care of dependent children).
- Interest and dividend receipts
- Business income (Depreciation and business losses may not be deducted.)
- Rental income (Depreciation and rental losses may not be deducted.)
- Capital gains other than the gain from the sale of your primary residence that was reinvested in another primary residence within the same calendar year. (Capital losses may not be deducted from income or used to offset capital gains.)

If there was a change in your income prior to November 1 that is expected to last indefinitely, you may estimate your income. Multiply your new average monthly income by 12.

Example: you retired in September and your monthly income was reduced from $2,000 to $1,000 beginning in October. Multiply $1,000 x 12. $12,000 is your new estimated annual disposable income.

To determine your disposable income, you may also deduct the following:

- Non-reimbursed amounts you paid to live in a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home
- Non-reimbursed amounts paid for prescription drugs
- Insurance premiums for Medicare under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act
- Non-reimbursed amounts paid for goods and services that allow you to receive in-home care. The care received must be similar to the care provided by a nursing home. In-home care includes medical treatment, physical therapy, Meals-on-Wheels (or similar meal delivery service), and household and personal care. Personal care includes assistance with meals, getting dressed, eating, taking medications, or personal hygiene. Special furniture and equipment, such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, and oxygen also qualify.

How much assistance is available?

If you meet the other qualifications, the amount of assistance available is calculated using your combined disposable income, the value of your residence, and regular and excess levy rates in your taxing jurisdiction.

This program is designed to be a supplement to the Senior and Disabled Persons Exemption Program. It does not replace the Exemption Program. The amount of assistance you will receive from the Property Tax Assistance Program for Widows or Widowers of Veterans will be the same whether or not you apply for the Exemption Program. To receive the maximum benefit for which you are eligible, you must apply for both programs.

If your application for the Property Tax Assistance Program for Widows or Widowers of Veterans is approved, you will be entitled to assistance that is equal to the regular and excess property taxes that are due on the difference between the value of your residence that is eligible for relief under the Exemption Program and:

The first $100,000 of assessed value of the residence, if your disposable income is $30,000 or less.

The first $75,000 of assessed value of the residence, if your disposable income is $30,001 - $35,000.

The first $50,000 of assessed value of the residence, if your disposable income is $35,001 - $40,000.

Example: If the value of your residence is $200,000 and your combined disposable income is $28,000, under the Senior and Disabled Exemption Program you are eligible for an exemption on regular property taxes on $70,000 in value and 100 percent of taxes due on excess levies. Under the Property Tax Assistance Program for Widows or Widowers of Veterans, you are eligible for assistance in the amount equal to the taxes on an additional $30,000 in value. You will still owe all regular property taxes on the remaining $100,000 of assessed value. Whether or not you apply for the Exemption Program, under the Property Tax Assistance Program for Widows or Widowers of Veterans, you will still only receive assistance for the taxes on the additional $30,000 in value.

Will this assistance ever have to be repaid?

All or part of the assistance received may have to be repaid if you no longer live on the property.

The property for which the claim is made must be your permanent primary residence from the date the application is submitted through December 15 of that year. If the property is no longer your permanent primary residence during that period, the amount of assistance for the remainder of the year must be repaid. A lien may be placed on the property in favor of the state of Washington until repayment is complete.

How will I know the amount of assistance I will receive?

The Department of Revenue will mail a determination letter telling you the amount of assistance for which you are eligible.

What if my claim is denied?

You can appeal the decision to the Washington State Board of Tax Appeals (BTA). The BTA must receive your appeal within 30 days of the date the determination was mailed. Appeal forms are available from the Board of Tax Appeals at (360) 753-5446 or on the web at http://bta.state.wa.us.

What if my circumstances change?

You must notify us in writing if your status changes.

Examples of status changes include:

- Marriage
- Sale or transfer of the property
- Change of address
- Change in income
- Change in disability status
- Survivors must notify us of death

How do I renew my assistance grant after the first year?

A renewal application is required to continue assistance. If you are approved to receive assistance for the current tax year, a renewal application will automatically be sent to you in January of the following year. The renewal application must be completed and returned 30 days before your taxes are due.

Laws

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 84.39 – Property Tax Exemptions – Widows or Widowers of Veterans

We will provide copies of specific laws upon request. Please call our Telephone Information Center at 1-800-647-7706.

Department of Revenue
Washington State

Need Help?

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